

As the traveler ascends by an easy climb and gentle undulations the winding road out on the face of Droop Mountain he beholds a panorama of unsurpassed loveliness when the sun pours his effulgent warmth and brightness over mountains, plains, valleys and hills as they unite in proclaiming "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." He also beholds historic ground, for it was at the foot of Droop Mountain where General Averill with 5000 men pitched their tents before the battle of Droop Mountain which began on November 6, 1863.

Hillsboro has always been a religious and educational center. John Jordan of Pioneer fame, gave a building site to the Methodist church, which was destroyed by fire. They have since built four other churches in the community and now worship in a very comfortable, commodious building in the town of Hillsboro. In extracts from the journal of Rev. Francis Asbury, we find that in the years 1788, 1790 and 1796 he made three evangelistic tours through this section of the country, coming through Greenbrier County, each time and being entertained and preaching at the home of McNeel in the Little Levels, going from there to the Drinnen home where he was received so "gladly" and entertained so "kindly" in the Edray neighborhood. His course led from there to Cloverlick, down through Tygarts Valley in Randolph County enroute to Morgantown. At the McNeel home lively religious discussions were indulged in by the whole community.

Oak Grove Presbyterian Church was organized in the year 1793. The early records of the Church were lost and no one remembers when it was built. A substantial brick structure in which this sect worshiped for many years was later built south east of Hillsboro, where the cemetery is still kept up. In 1830 the church was re-organized and Josiah Beard, Davis Poague, and John Jordan were elected elders. The most distinguished ministers who served this Church from 1820 to 1872 were Rev. Joseph Brown, Rev. Wm. C. Campbell, Rev. John S. Blain, Rev. Mitchell S. Dunlap and Rev. D. S. Sydenstricker.

In the early part of the eighteenth century a very important educational work flourished in what was then the Village of Hillsboro. Under the supervision of Rev.

the brick Academy was built and contained one large-central room with
 the name of Hillsboro was abandoned in deference to that of "Academy" so
 the impression of the schools' influence on the minds and hearts of the
 In recent years the old name of Hillsboro has been restored to the town.
 A. Dunlap, of Ponca City, Oklahoma, has contributed some recollections of
 the better days from his remarkable memory of conversations heard in the home of his
 Rev. H. A. Dunlap. He thinks the first teacher ever in Hillsboro community
 a man by the name of Keenan who taught more than a hundred years ago. This teacher
 considered a very learned man from the fact that he could read and write and had
 figured in the arithmetic as far as the rule of three.

The next teacher was Rev. John S. Blain, a Presbyterian preacher, a teacher,
 a physician. He is described as a large, lean, strong man, possessed of a kindly
 and gentle heart. The description is somewhat contradictory as he is said to
 have whipped 13 boys the second day of school, 21 the third day, and five or six
 each day for about a week. After that no further trouble was experienced. But the
 school had an unsavory reputation that had to be disciplined and he used the means
 within his power. The wife of Dr. Blain was a Miss MacRoberts, sister of Archibald
 MacRoberts, who made his home with them, told that panthers would sometimes enter
 their spring house and drink their milk. Mrs. MacRoberts, whose father was Randolph,
 of Kansas, and a descendent of Pocahontas, was the next teacher. He was well educated
 and a man of great talents that he used only under compulsion. He was a Whig, and
 in a campaign then being conducted between a Whig and a Democrat, in which the Whig
 was defeated in the argument, Mr. MacRoberts became so disgusted that he followed
 them to the next appointment and so completely routed the Democrat that he made it
 difficult to steer clear of his antagonist.

The next teacher was Rev. Joseph Brown, whose gentle Christian character
 was loved to the people; and it is to be taken for granted that as he was instrumental
 in the building of the brick Academy, he must have been the first teacher within its
 walls. Rev. J. D. Dunlap succeeded him and taught from 1855 to 1860. His school had a
 high reputation and his pupils and enjoyed the patronage of the Louises and

of Kanawha county; Tyrees and others of Fayette county; the Haynes and others of Boone county; the Johnsons, Bears, and others of Greenbrier county; the Johnsons, Lightners, and Ruchmans, of Highland county, Virginia, and the Lewises and others of Bath county, Virginia. He taught throughout the entire year and sought the help of the more advanced pupils, notably, Rev. Wm. P. Price and Rev. James Haynes. It was his opinion that about eighty pupils were as many as one man could handle.

Miss Mary Sprinkel taught in the home of Colonel McNeel, the first year of the Civil War, and was betrothed to John Burgess, the first man from this community to be killed by the Northern soldiers in their initial raid through the country.

From the foregoing interesting data it is easy to understand why so many noble and worthy lives were molded in this fine institution of learning. The lives of Mr. Hermanus Stulting and family deserve special mention. They were natives of Holland, and to escape religious persecution, braved the perils of the deep on the rude craft of that day and came to dwell among us when the country was in its infancy. They were valuable additions to the social life of the community and through their devoted piety accomplished much good in this land of their adoption. Mr. Cornelius Stulting, eldest son in the family, was a fine teacher for many years and died recently, mourned by all who knew him. Mrs. Carrie Stulting Sydenstricker, a daughter in the family, gave her life as a missionary to China, being sent as a member of Oak Grove Church.

Pioneers. The first permanent settler in the wilderness of the Hillsboro community was John McNeel, of Frederick County, Virginia. He was of a pugilistic temperament and in the fear that he had slain his antagonist, fled from his native land and became a fugitive who followed the trend of the Alleghenies. After spending sometime in their gloomy depths he emerged into this section of the country and was so favorably impressed with the fertile land, fine timber and the general outlook of a goodly place to dwell, that he cast his tent on the gentle slope between where are now the gate at the road and the father John McNeel residence. He came here in the year 1765. After he began to occupy his tent steps were heard circling the camp

night. He feigned sleep, keeping his gun near at hand, until he heard something creep upon the poles forming the roof. When he looked in the direction of the sound he beheld, by the light of the camp fire, the fiery eyes of a panther. He lost no time in getting rid of the unwelcome visitor.

On day while out hunting for venison and fish he met Charles and Jacob Kennison, natives of his home land, who proved angels in disguise in bringing to him the glad tidings that the man he thought he had killed had recovered and was in good health. Imagination fails to convey the great relief and gratitude that filled his heart to know he was not a murderer, of which his future life gave convincing evidence. He invited the Kennisons to share his camp and aided them in selecting a home site adjoining his tract. About this time John McNeel must have built himself a cabin in the rear of the Matthew John McNeel residence, near a wonderful spring in that locality. These three men soon returned to the lower valley of Virginia. It was on this visit that he married Martha Davis who was born in Wales in 1840. Soon after their marriage they came to the Little Levels to make their home. They brought with them a Welch Bible now in the possession of Joseph S. McNeel, son of Captain William Lamb McNeel.

Joseph McNeel is the man who offered, free of charge, marble or granite to build our new State Capitol. This stone exists in great abundance within our beautiful hills that encompass our mountains and that shelter our valley on the West. It has been a source of great disappointment to many to have such a generous offer rejected and one that if it had been accepted would have filled the heart of every citizen with a just and civic pride.

John McNeel was so deeply impressed with a sense of God's providential care that, in gratitude of him, he built the White Hole Church on the hill set apart for the McNeel cemetery, the first church in the community. These three men joined the expedition to Point Pleasant in October 10, 1774. They were spared to return home, for a short time, as they enlisted in a company formed in Frederick County, Virginia, during the Revolution. After that experience they returned to the Country and resumed "the even tenor of their lives".